

Message Text

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SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 EB-08 TRSE-00 OMB-01 COME-00

ACDA-12 IO-13 /121 W

-----085951 231613Z /47

R 281415Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6527

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RABAT 5158

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, MO, UR

SUBJ: DEPARTURE OF SOVIET AMBASSADOR: THE STATE OF MOROCCAN-
SOVIET RELATIONS

REF: A. RABAT 3150, B. RABAT 2817, C. RABAT 2538,
D. RABAT 1786, E. RABAT 1556

1. SUMMARY. DEPARTING SOVIET AMBASSADOR DIMITRI GORUNOV'S
FIVE YEARS IN MOROCCO HAVE BEEN MARKED BY SIGNIFICANT
ACHIEVEMENT IN THE COMMERCIAL/ECONOMIC REALM BUT LITTLE,
IF ANY, GAIN FOR THE SOVIET ON THE POLITICAL SIDE.
MOROCCAN-SOVIET RELATIONS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY
POTENTIALLY CLSOE ECONOMIC COOPERATION BUT DIAMETRICALLY
OPPOSED ORIENTATIONS TOWARD KEY POLITICAL ISSUES. THE
GOM IS SATISFIED WITH THIS ARRANGEMENT, DESCRIBING IT AS
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A MODEL FOR OTHERS. FROM RABAT'S PERSPECTIVE, THE GOM
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR NOT ONLY PROVIDES NEEDED
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE BUT ALSO DISTANCES MOSCOW FROM
ALGERIA'S WESTERN SAHARA POLICY AND STRENGHTENS
MOROCCO'S NON-ALIGNED CREDENTIALS. SOME MOROCCANS
FORESEE A GROWING LEVERAGE OVER SOVIET POLICY IN THE
REGION. HOWEVER, THIS VIEW IS PROBABLY OVERLY

OPTIMISTIC, AND IT IS PROBLEMATIC WHETHER EITHER COUNTRY WILL REAP POLITICAL LEVERAGE FROM THIS ECONOMIC COOPERATION IN THE LONG TERM. END SUMMARY

2. ENDING ALMOST FIVE YEARS IN RABAT, SOVIET AMBASSADOR DIMITRI PETROVICH GORUNOV WAS AWARDED THE "OUISSAMM ALAOUITE DE L'ORDER DE GRAND OFFICIER" BY KING HASSAN ON AUGUST 15. THE AWARD IS APPROPRIATE FOR AN AMBASSADOR OF HIS RANK AND TENURE BUT NOT THE HIGHEST DECORATION POSSIBLE. GORUNOV WAS NEVER POPULAR HERE, APPEARING HEAVY HANDED AND ILL AT EASE IN HIS ROLE. FOR EXAMPLE, HE NEVER MADE AN EFFORT TO LEARN FRENCH OR ARABIC. INDEED, KING HASSAN HIMSELF CHIDED GORUNOV FOR THIS SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. (PERHAPS SYMBOLICALLY GORUNOV PRESIDED OVER THE CONSTRUCTION OF A FORTRESS-LIKE COMPLEX THAT RELEGATES THE LARGE SOVIET EMBASSY TO A REMOTENESS ALIEN TO OTHER MISSIONS HERE.)

3. NEVERTHELESS, GORUNOV'S TOUR WAS CAPPED BY TWO COMMERCIAL/ECONOMIC SUCCESSES EARLIER THIS YEAR. IN MARCH, MOROCCO AND THE SOVIET UNION SIGNED A SERIES OF ACCORDS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOROCCO'S MESKALA PHOSPHATE DEPOSITS AND A RELATED THIRTY-YEAR BARTER EXCHANGE (REF E). THIS WAS FOLLOWED IN APRIL BY A BILATERAL FISHING AGREEMENT, WHICH ENVISIONS SIGNIFICANT SOVIET ASSISTANCE FOR MOROCCO'S FISHING INDUSTRY (REF C AND D).
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THE ACCORDS APPEAR MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL, OFFERING CLEAR AND SPECIFIC ADVANTAGES FOR TWO COUNTRIES WHOSE ECONOMIES ARE IN MANY RESPECTS COMPLEMENTARY. THE AGREEMENTS MAKE MOROCCO POTENTIALLY THE USSR'S LARGEST TRADING PARTNER IN AFRICA AND PORTEND SUBSTANTIAL DEVELOPMENTAL BENEFITS FOR MOROCCO.

4. THIS ECONOMIC COOPERATION HAS NOT BEEN MATCHED IN THE POLITICAL REALM, WHERE THE GOM HAS REGULARLY ADOPTED POSITIONS DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO THOSE OF THE USSR. KING HASSAN CHARACTERIZED THIS POLICY IN LATE JUNE TO THE FRENCH WEEKLY L'EXPRESS:

AS FOR THE USSR, BECAUSE WE HAVE MAINTAINED GOOD ECONOMIC RELATIONS, WHILE COMBATting ITS POLITICAL-MILITARY INFLUENCE, NEITHER THE RUSSIANS NOR I HAVE THE SLIGHTEST ILLUSION. ONE CAN DISAGREE AND REMAIN COURTEOUS. I TOLD THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP, "DO NOT WASTE YOUR TIME TRYING TO MAKE US MARXISTS. I AM NOT GOING TO WASTE MINE TRYING TO MAKE YOU MOSLEMS."

ASIDE FROM CULTURAL EXCHANGES, THE ONLY HINTS OF NON-ECONOMIC COOPERATION ARE OCCASIONAL RUMORS OF SMALL DELIVERIES OF MILITARY SPARE PARTS TO REPLENISH SOVIET

EQUIPMENT ACQUIRED IN THE 1960'S.

5. OTHERWISE, THE GOM IS EXTEREMLY CRITICAL OF CUBAN INTERVENTION IN AFRICA AND HOSTILE TO SOVIET-SUPPORTED REGIMES IN ETHIOPIA AND ANGOLA (REF A). MOROCCO WAS ALSO ONE OF THE FIRST COUNTRIES TO SUPPORT PRESIDENT SADAT'S PEACE INITIATIVE. KING HASSAN'S CENTRAL PREMISE FOR JUSTIFYING HIS INTERVENTION IN ZAIRE WAS THAT THE SHABA INVASIONS WERE PART OF A COMMUNIST PLAN TO TAKE OVER AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST WITH THE ULTIMATE AIM OF CUTTING THE FLOW OF NATURAL RESOURCES TO THE WEST. INDEED, MOROCCO HAS BEEN A PRIME PUSHER FOR MORE WESTERN INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA. THE SOVIETS HAVE PRIVATELY COMPLAINED OF MOROCCO'S ROLE IN ZAIRE AND AT LEAST ONCE
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PROTESTED TO PRIME MINISTER OSMAN DIRECTLY ABOUT THE "OVERLY PRO-WESTERN EDITORIAL POLICIES" OF SEMI-OFFICIAL AL-MAGHRIB.

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6. THE GOM USES ITS SOVIET CONNECTION FOR ALL THE POLITICAL MILEAGE IT CAN, PARTICULARLY IN AN EFFORT TO DISTANCE MOSCOW FROM ALGERIAN POLICY ON THE WESTERN SAHARA. RABAT HAS BEEN REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL HERE. MOSCOW HAS MAINTAINED ITS NEUTRAL STANCE ON THE SAHARA AND SHIED AWAY FROM PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE POLISARIO. IT HAS NOT, HOWEVER, SLOWED ITS FLOW OF ARMS TO ALGERIA, LIBYA AND INDIRECTLY THE POLISARIO. THE SOVIETS AGREED TO AMBIGUOUS TERMINOLOGY IN THE APRIL BILATERAL FISHING ACCORD WHICH MANY MOROCCANS VIEW AS IMPLIED RECOGNITION OF MOROCCO SOVEREIGNTY THERE (REF B). MOROCCO HAS ALSO FOUND IT USEFUL TO EMPHASIZE THE SOVIET COMMERCIAL TIES IN THE NON-ALIGNED CONTEXT, ESPECIALLY GIVEN CRITICISM OF THE GOM'S FOREIGN POLICY BY "PROGRESSIVE" STATES. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUCETTA SEVERAL TIMES MADE REFERENCE TO THESE TIES AT THE JULY BELGRADE NAM MEETING AS PROOF
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OF MOROCCO'S CREDENTIALS AS A NON-ALIGNED COUNTRY.

7. MOROCCO IS QUITE CONSCIOUS OF ITS BALANCING GAME. IN EARLY JULY PRIME MINISTER OSMAN DESCRIBED THE MESKALA AGREEMENT AS "THE PERFECT MODEL" OF AN ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN A THIRD WORLD COUNTRY AND A SUPERPOWER "WITH DIFFERENT POLITICAL SYSTEMS." AT THAT TIME, THE GOM WAS INCREASING ITS INDIRECT CRITICISM OF SOVIET AFRICAN POLICIES. SOME MOROCCANS FORESEE GROWING LEVERAGE OVER SOVIET POLICIES IN THE REGION, AS THE USSR COMES INCREASINGLY TO RELY ON MOROCCAN PHOSPHATES FOR ITS VITAL FERTILIZER INDUSTRY. THIS VIEW IS PROBABLY MUCH TOO OPTIMISTIC. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT MOSCOW WILL ALLOW ITSELF TO BECOME DEPENDENT ON A SINGLE SOURCE, SUCH AS MOROCCO, FOR SUCH A VITAL PRODUCT. NOR, AS ITS CONTINUING ARMS SALES TO ALGERIA SHOW, WILL IT MODIFY ALL ITS POLICIES TO SATISFY THE GOM. IN ADDITION, CLOSE SCRUTINY OF THE PHOSPHATE ACCORDS INDICATES THAT THEY ARE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENTS WHICH REQUIRE A SERIES OF CONTRACTS TO IMPLEMENT THE VARIOUS PROVISIONS OF THE OVERALL AGREEMENTS. AT EACH POINT WHERE NEGOTIATION OF CONTRACTS IS REQUIRED, THE MOROCCANS WILL HAVE THE OPTION TO REJECT SOVIET PROPOSALS FOR THE SUPPLY OF EQUIPMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES. HOWEVER, AS THE PROJECTS PROGRESS, THE MOROCCANS MAY WELL BECOME LOCKED INTO SOVIET SOURCING WHICH MAY IN TURN PROVIDE MOSCOW A DEGREE OF LEVERAGE (REF E).

8. IN ANY CASE, THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE THAT MOROCCO OR THE USSR WILL BE ABLE TO EXACT FROM THEIR ECONOMIC

EXCHANGES WILL NOT BECOME CLEAR UNTIL THE PROJECTS
ARE WILL UNDERWAY. THE MOROCCANS ARE NOT UNAWARE OF
THE POTENTIAL FOR SOVIET INFLUENCE AND CAREFULLY
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SCRUTINIZED THE BILATERAL ECONOMIC ACCORDS. FEAR OF
SOVIET LEVERAGE IS ALSO REPORTEDLY THE REASON WHY THE
GOM HAS SO FAR REFUSED ALLEGED SOVIET OFFERS TO RESUME
ARMS SALES.

9. IN SHORT, WE BELIEVE THAT FOR THE FORESEEABLE
FUTURE, MOROCCAN-SOVIET RELATIONS ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN
COURTEOUS AND INCREASINGLY CLOSE ECONOMICALLY WHILE
MARKED BY SHARP PRIVATE DISAGREEMENT AND INDIRECT PUBLIC
CRITICISM IN THE POLITICAL REALM.MOFFAT

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